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I am making this submission as	General public
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Submission type	Personal
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Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
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Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	
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Consent to make submission public	Public
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Your story	
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1.1 Causes and contributing factors	<p>ROLE OF WEATHER: Was last summer different? Every summer brings heat. Yet many people seem surprised.</p> <p>ROLE OF DROUGHT: The drought affected western farmlands; the bushfires were mainly coastal, and in timbered areas.</p> <p>ROLE OF CLIMATE CHANGE: Many claim 'climate change' is an unproven proposition, and therefore such a notion cannot be blamed.</p> <p>Also, government meteorological agencies, for whatever reason, are now 'adjusting' climate data gathered in the past. This destroys the validity of the 'science'.</p>
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ROLE OF FUEL LOADS:

There are so many variables here, as there are so many different types of ground cover/bushland, in different climatic zones. And each of these land areas has been left untouched, or dealt with by users in different ways, over the past decades.

Fuel loads, of varying extent, have always existed. The Report needs to take the long view.

The term 'fuel load' has become a useful jargon term for both the fire fighting industry and the media.

ROLE OF HUMAN ACTIVITY:

The RFS and police should be able to accurately report on arson. Can they?

1.2 Preparation and planning

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The more money the more fires? As the RFS receives more funding it gets a bigger bureaucracy - buildings, staff, data collection, communications equipment, imposing uniforms, insignia, trucks and equipment, and lots of aeroplane and helicopter hiring.

Whilst it can't be the case that increased amounts of money received by the RFS results in more uncontrolled fires, it certainly results in more 'controlled burns', and SMOKE.

BUILDING STANDARDS:

As we know, houses, even at quite a distance from bushland, can be burnt by flying embers, eg, the ACT.

This is an enormously complex matter, as it involves considering distances from the bush, the specification of particular building design features, and acceptance of risk. I would say: leave matters largely as they are, and accept the risk. Tweak standards after long considerations on expert recommendation.

1.3 Response to bushfires

'CONTROLLED BURNS' INITIATED BY THE RFS:

Regarding the 2019-2020 bushfire season, shouldn't the RFS report on the number and extent of the fires - 'controlled burns' - that it deliberately started?

Perhaps the RFS will be unwilling, even unable, to report on these burns as there were, apparently, so many of them over a long period.

Who would know how many of these back-burns added to the extent of existing fires? They certainly contributed to the amount of smoke over Sydney and environs.

THE MEDIA:

Is there any reason to mention what always remains unspoken: the media and the viewing public benefited from the bushfire season.

The RFS benefited from the media coverage, with much coverage given to the brave fire-fighters, and sympathy for those who died, directly or indirectly.

The fires were a 'win' for both groups.

1.4 Any other matters

REASON FOR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY:

Throughout NSW thousands/tens of thousands of people have

built houses against the bush, or a few metres away from it. In so many cases the houses are constructed beneath the bush canopy (eg, the Blue Mountains, generally; Guerrilla Bay, to name a particular example).

What outcome do these owners expect? Obviously they all hope for the best, and accept the risk.

The community needs to recognise that in these situations there is no solution, and that public funds, and sympathy, can't be wasted on a self-selected life-style - one that accepts the likelihood of catastrophe.

'LAND USE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT ... INCLUDING APPROPRIATE CLEARING AND OTHER HAZARD REDUCTION ...':

The mantra 'HAZARD REDUCTION' has become an excuse, unfortunately, for fire volunteers to spend enjoyable weekends, in a para-military environment, doing 'controlled burns'. These are done in most parts of Sydney, and surrounding areas, over long periods, noticeably increasing in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

As we are all aware, smoke has blanketed Sydney on numerous occasions over the past three years as the RFS does 'hazard reduction burns'. On these days the EPA, on its website, often lists the air quality in Sydney as poor, very poor and hazardous.

Hazard reduction burns are giving us all, not just stinging eyes and irritated throats, but long term respiratory problems, if not actual lung damage. The lungs of babies and children, who might have 70 years of life ahead of them, are particularly affected. The NSW Department of Health should have input here.

The NSW Government must not allow large parts of bushland within the Sydney basin to be 'slow-burnt', at intervals of five to ten years, using small fires and dousing hoses. This procedure generates lots of smoke, from smouldering bush, for days. It seems to have become normal practice. It means that there is smoke over Sydney on numerous occasions throughout the year, or whenever 'conditions are right'.

The five million or more people in the Sydney basin need to be able to breathe air of a reasonable quality. They all can't attempt to shelter from the smoke in air-conditioned buildings with high quality air filters (like, no doubt, do RFS HQ staff and politicians).

...'ANY APPROPRIATE USE OF INDIGENOUS PRACTICES':

The value of the Report will be diminished if it indulges any 'dreamtime' ideas, rather than report what is actually known about the burning of land by pre-1788 indigenous groups.

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